DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 123 106 IR 003 461

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TITLE Instructional Development and Regional Service Agencies in Elementary/Secondary Education.
PUB DATE Apr 76
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Association for Educational Communications and Technology Annual Meeting (Anaheim, California, March 29-April 2, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; Interagency Coordination; Intermediate Administrative Units; *Organizational Change; *Professional Services; *Regional Cooperation; School Districts; *State School District Relationship; *Supplementary Educational Centers
IDENTIFIERS AECT 76; Instructional Development; *Regional Educational Service Agencies; RESA

ABSTRACT

Recent years have witnessed the creation of numerous Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA), legally constituted agencies which serve specific educational needs for a pool of local school districts. A recent survey of RESA administrators examines these agencies according to size, purpose, and the populations they serve. Most frequently, activities focus on special education, remedial reading, career education, and vocational education. In the Detroit area, the Wayne County Intermediate School District serves the needs of the educational community by providing instructional developers who serve both as resources to and coordinators of local school districts. (EMH)

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INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES IN ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION

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One of the most significant and wide ranging movements of the last fifteen years in the organization of elementary/secondary education has been the establishment of a service unit situated between the state eeudcation agency and the local school district. Over half of the states in the county have moved to or are seriously considering such an organizational pattern. These units are being established as major alternatives for the provision of specialized and more expensive programs and services. A variety of titles are used to describe these service agencies. Names used are: Educational Service Units, Education Service Centers, Intermediate School Districts, Board of Cooperative Services and Joint County Systems. The foremost student of these units, E. Robert Stephens of the University of Maryland, suggests that a generic name for these service agencies be Regional Education Service Agency (RESA).

Three fundamental concepts characterize regional educational service agencies according to Stephens.[1] They are:

- Regional in geographic area, frequently extending beyond the political boundaries of a single county.

- Service oriented and tuned to the needs of their constituent local school districts; rather than designed to perform administrative and regulatory functions for the state education agency.

- Legally constituted components of the state school system.

While there has been a trend toward asking RESAs to deal with more administrative responsibilities for the state, the regulatory aspect has been resisted in most cases to date.

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A majority of RESA units were established as a result of statewide studies sponsored by the state education agency which were typically endorsed by professional organizations in the state. The significance of these preliminary activities are that: (a) there is commitment and ownership on the part of the state for these units; (b) professional associations have had ongoing involvement which helps allay concerns on the part of local school districts and other sectors of the professional community that a new and threatening agency is being superimposed, and (c) most enabling legislation for RESA units has given the state education agency significant review power to help assure operational effectiveness.

A survey of the needs of over four hundred RESA administrators reported at the 1976 American Association of School Administrators Convention provides the following profile:[2]

NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

NUMBER	PERCENT
1-5	17.8
6-10	26.6
11-15	18.1
16-20	11.4
21-25	9.0
More than 25	16.3
No response	0.8

ENROLLMENTS IN DISTRICTS SERVED

PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS	PERCENT
25,000 or more	41.2
10,000 - 24,999	22.3
2,500 - 9,999	25.3
Less than 2,500	9.1
No response	2.4

TYPE OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS SERVED

DESCRIPTION	PERCENT
Mix of town-rural	42.3
Rural	31.4
Mix of urban-suburban	13.5
Suburban	4.3
Urban	0.3
Other	7.4
No response	0.3

GEOGRAPHIC REGION OF THE UNITED STATES

New England	0.0
Mideast	15.2
Southeast	5.3
Great Lakes	38.3
Plains	13.0
Southwest	9.8
Rocky Mountains	5.9
Far West	12.2
No response	0.3

A study of two innovative, high-risk regional service agencies shows that a model for such units would include attention to the following:[3]

- The educational needs of constituent school districts.
- The existence of a tradition of cooperation among proposed constituent districts. If such a tradition does not exist cooperative activities should be engaged before initiating the agency.
- The nature of the agency should be semiautonomous and the unit should have some choice concerning control of its own activities.
- Superintendents of schools from the constituent districts should be members of the service agency advisory board.
- Agency leadership and staff should be selected for their expertise in meeting local needs, for balance in age and experience, for leadership potential, and for ability to identify and work with influential persons in local school systems.
- Agency leadership personnel should undergo an orientation and training period prior to assuming their posts due to the unique nature of regional service agencies.
- Stability of staff and leadership are essential.

- Outside consultants and short term staff appointments should be used to compensate for gaps in expertise.

- Programs offered should serve to make the agency indispensable to constituent school districts.

- The agency should be established to provide services to children and youth rather than for the administration of state rules and regulations.

- Imaginative alternatives to established practice and the provision of those services not available individually to constituent school districts should be stressed.

- An effective communications program should be maintained for purposes of visibility and promoting programs and services.

- Constituent school districts should share in the support of the RESA, State and Federal funds should also be available.

A national study of the services provided by regional units indicates the following as the most frequently and least frequently offered services.[4]

MOST FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED SERVICES

Special Education	Vocational Education
Career Education	Multi Media
Remedial Reading	Migrant Education
Pupil Peronnel Services	Distributive Education
Environmental Education	Data Processing
Cooperative Purchasing	Arts and Humanities
Science Education	Bilingual Education

LESS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED SERVICES

Teacher Inservice	Gifted
Metric Education	Planning
Driver Education	Evaluation
Drug Education	Home Bound
Adult Education	Communications

The most frequently mentioned activities divided into the general subcatagories of programs and services are:

Programs	Services
Special Education	Inservice Training
Remedial Reading	Consultant Services
Career Education	Planning
Vocational Education	Evaluation
	Materials Selection
	Information Dissemination

By intent, role, and design regional educational service agencies are becoming major brokerage institutions in elementary/secondary education. They are an emerging institution, well formed in many situations, yet still flexible and open. They are program and service oriented.

Regional educational service agencies are a prime, yet largely untapped, area for Instructional Development activities. A brief look at the target populations, program content being dealt with, and techniques and mechanism available will reaffirm this judgement.

Target Populations	Content Areas	Techniques and Mechanisms
Multi-District	Leadership	Inservice
LEAs by Scope of Population	Management	Dissemination
Educational Leaders	Early Childhood	Diffusion
Teachers	Affective Education	Networks
Students	Career/Vocational Education	Technology
	Basic Skills	Instructional Development
	Sexism	
	etc.	

How does Instructional Development become operational in a regional service agency? An illustration from the third most populist county school system in the country may provide some guidance on this question.

An indication of support and commitment to the ID process at the regional level is the appointment of a consultant or coordinator of Instructional Development. The Wayne County Intermediate School District, which includes the school district of Detroit, has had a coordinator of Instructional Development as part of its staffing structure for two and a half years. A look at the purposes and role of this position may help us identify factors related to successful implementation of ID.

Wayne County Schools became interested in the implementation of ID because it has the potential to be a "consumate" approach to facilitating change in education in that it draws together techniques from a range of other disciplines -- cybernetics, management science, operations research, data processing, information storage and retrieval, and all of the attendant sub-sets of systems theory, design, analysis, and evaluation. The job description for the position of Coordinator of Instructional Development in Wayne County indicates that the general role is to "stimulate and conduct the development of new instructional methods and materials designed to impact priority education problems." Examples of work given are:

- Conducts needs analysis of troublesome instructional problems.
- Develops new instructional approaches designed to solve priority problems in cooperation with local and intermediate district individuals and groups.
- Marshals available local and national resources in the solution of instructional problems.
- Works on research and development projects with other Wayne County Intermediate School District staff members.

The responsibility, as pointed out by Bob Diamond in his article in the December 1971 issue of Audio Visual Instruction, is to be teacher, technician, salesman, manager, and evangelist.

The functions of the ID Coordinator are interwoven through many levels of intermediate school district, local school district, state educational agency, and national groups. In terms of intermediate school districts staff ID is carried out on a consulting basis within the priorities set by the specific staff member seeking assistance. This action could result in furnishing special or unique resources, the setting of priorities, the development and delivery of a program, active participation on a colleague basis or direction of a specific program. Similarly, the role with local schools could assume a variety of stances, depending on the context of the situation presented. In all cases, however, the Coordinator of Instructional Development is first and foremost a competent, trusted, facilitator in the systematic processes for improving learning situations and resultant outcomes.

Specific tasks which the ID coordinator carries out include:

- Attending staff and local school district meetings on a regular basis.
- Assembling, distilling and validating district-wide needs assessment.
- Representing the district on consortia special developmental projects.
- Identifying and evaluating the potential of developmental projects in the county.
- Identifying and evaluating products generated by office staff which may have impact on the needs of constituent school districts.
- Maintain close liaison with state and federal funding information and participating in proposal writing and implementation where applicable.
- Developing programs for training in the Instructional Development process.
- Seeking organizational structures and mission definitions for research and development consortia.
- Maintaining contacts with private and public agencies sponsoring, producing, and distributing materials involving ID processes or covering ID theory and practice, for possible staff and local district use.

- Furnishing appropriate and timely reports on the status of specific projects, activities, plans and contacts developed by the coordinator.

- Providing assistance to local district leadership people in initiating, conducting, and evaluating development activities.

A sample list of programs which the Coordinator is presently involved in includes:

Career Education Consortium

Glasser Technique Workshops

Affective Education Network

Continuing Education for [illegible]s Program

Reading Council

Alternatives and Options Association

Interinstitutional Workshop

Manpower Development Program

Media Personnel Development Program

Individually Guided Instructional League

Middle School Leadership Training

Regional Educational Media Center Planning

What of the future? What are the conditions that shape future directions for Instructional Development activity? Factors are:

- Changing emphasis in society, law and the courts

- Constant organizational change

- Competition for funds (including competition with constituent districts)

- The question of provision of more or less direct services

- New modes of operation and linkages

- The identity crisis in education

- The legitimization of RESA research

- The development of Networks

Given the above conditions, the most likely and profitable areas for Instructional Development activity in regional service agencies are:

- Staff development
- Training in process techniques
- Continuing assessment of roles and functions
- Increasing knowledge of innovation, linkage procedures, and adoption strategies
- Providing quick access to human, institutional, and media resources
- Sharpening evaluation skills
- Developing mechanisms for sensing issues and expressing leadership
- Increasing receptivity for risk taking
- Developing linkages which encourage the involvement of interdisciplinary expertise
- Developing planning mechanisms for or with the State Department of Education and local districts
- Developing understandings of technology and management sciences

There seems to be great congruence between Regional Educational Service Agencies and Instructional Development. RESAs are emerging brokerage institutions in elementary/secondary education. Instructional Development is a brokerage activity. RESAs by their nature concentrate on high impact areas which have the potential for broad effect. The purpose of Instructional Development is to produce positive change in education.

In sum, Regional Educational Service Agencies are a significant arena for Instructional Development activity and should be a significant market for ID skills

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4/14/76